1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SO8 Timbira SO8



The members of a house community of the type described are obviously closer to one another than to outsiders at large, but they fail to constitute a definite economic unit among the Timbira. The plantations of the residents are ordinarily in juxtaposition, but every married woman has her own plots and the house community as such has no property apart from the domicile.

However, the entire group will safeguard the individual's rights against any injustice from the outside. On one occasion, for example, a man treated his wife badly and deserted her, whereupon her extended family met for prolix deliberations and tried to force the renegade to pay an indemnity. In this sense the safety of the individual rests on his affiliation with the major family, and during disputes one often hears such threats as: "I have a large body of kindred." To tell a man to his face that he lacks kin is an affront.

On the other hand, the house community plays not the slightest role in ceremonial. Further it lacks a genuine head. Theoretically the grandmother should occupy that position, but this obtains in a small minority of cases because with increasing age her daughters grow dominant. Actually the main part devolves on some matrilineal grandfather or uncle, who may not even live in the house. A matriarchate and the enslavement of women are notions equally foreign to the Timbira.

Snethlage has correctly grasped the nature of this unit.[170]

## Rainy Season Moieties[171]

During the meipimrą'k period, that is, from September to April—in other words, roughly during the rainy season—there are no major festivals. It is accompanied by a distinctive dual division which coincides with neither the exogamous moieties, nor the plaza moieties, nor the age-class moieties—notwithstanding the fact that it, too, is connected with the antithesis of east and west. The two groups are called ką'makra and atų'kmakra, that is, people (kra) of the plaza (ką') and people from without (atų'k). The Indians are unable to explain these designations. The female members are termed ką'kwęiye and atų'kkwęiye.

All of nature is antithetically divided between the two groups, as indicated by the following incomplete scheme.

| kąmakra | | atų'makra | |
|---|---|---|---|
| East | Fire | West | Firewood |
| Sun | Earth | Moon | Water |
| Day | Red color | Night | Black color |
| Dry season | | Rainy season | |

This dichotomy does not involve the opposition of the sexes, but extends to animals and plants: all species that are black or show marked black coloring fall into the atų'k category; all those conspicuously red or white are ką'. Maize and manioc are ką', the sweet potato and cucurbit atų'k; yams are, according to the species, divided up between the two groups. The Indians justify the allocation of the celestial bodies by referring to the sun's rising in the east and to the new moon's in the west.

Affiliation with a rainy season moiety hinges on a person's names, which inevitably place him in one or the other category. The name sets are transferred by the same principle that determines allocation to a plaza group; a man transfers his

[170] Meine Reise, 464. Nordostbras. Ind., 170.

[171] It may in the future prove useful in ethnological literature to call "nonexogamous" moieties "agamic" or "agamous." These terms, already in vogue among biologists, would better designate moieties that are neither exogamous nor endogamous. R. H. L.

1: Nimuendaju E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS



Their public cult performances may be counted on the fingers of one hand, and several years elapsed before I discovered a private act unrelated to animism.

The Sun and Moon myth of the Eastern Timbira greatly resembles that of the Apinayé[86] and Šerénte. I heard it not only among the Rąmkõ'kamekra, but also wholly or in part among the Pụkóbye, Kre'pụ'mkateye, Krẽyé of Bacabal, and the Krahõ'. Both characters are conceived as male and as unrelated to each other. In Rąmkõ'kamekra myth they create mankind by diving in a brook, in a Pụkóbye variant, from bottle gourds in a plantation; but in none of the other six episodes of the myth do they in any way work for the benefit of humanity. Nevertheless the Rąmkõ'kamekra regard themselves as primarily dependent on the Sun (Pụt) and in much lesser degree also on the Moon (Pụduvrí).

The purpose of all the general cult performances is to invoke the heavenly bodies to protect food plants and animals. These acts comprise prayers to the Sun for rain (p. 62), for protection of game animals (p. 71), and on behalf of wild fruits (p. 72); and to the Moon to prosper the crops when maize has grown to about 3 feet in height (p. 62).

On the other hand, there was no trace of religion at the maize-planting ceremony (p. 62), nor was the hõčwá ceremony on behalf of the sweet-potato crop at all related to Sun and Moon worship, though it does bear a magical significance (p. 63).

During the entire period of my stay I witnessed only two instances of a person's supplicating the Sun. The first time a young woman was praying for a child (p. 130); the second time I heard a mother instructing her approximately seven-year-old son, who had been ill for a long time, to invoke the Sun as follows: "Kédeti! Iymą̃ ampõ'no, vatoekũne iypey! (Grandfather! Give me a remedy so that I'll recover!)" Further, I learnt that, when putting the mats soiled at the delivery into the fork of a steppe tree, the mother of a lying-in woman supplicates the Sun, as stated (p. 106), to protect the newborn infant.

The prayers have no fixed text, the suppliant addressing the Sun spontaneously as though conversing with an ordinary person. Thus some address him as pa'pám, Our Father; others as Kédeti, Grandfather. I have never heard of any Rąmkõ'kamekra seeing Sun or Moon in dreams or visions.

There is little knowledge of the course of the heavenly bodies. Time is reckoned by lunar phases and by seasons (rainy and dry). They do not know how many full moons there are in a year, being handicapped by their aboriginal number system, which does not go beyond four. They do not ponder the nature of the solar body. They know approximately where the sun rises and sets during the wet and the dry season, but they do not empirically determine the solstice or use it in time reckoning.

The younger age classes, regularly assembled in the plaza at sunset, always consider it fun to expect the appearance of the new moon, each youth vying with the rest to discover it first. As soon as it is detected, everybody raises his hands and utters piercing shouts "to give pleasure to the Moon."

The moon spots are explained in Rąmkõ'kamekra myth (p. 244) and somewhat differently by the Krẽyé of Bacabal.[87] No explanation was obtained for the lunar phases.

A lunar eclipse is called pụduvrį hitįk, that is, dying of the moon. In 1935 I witnessed one and went purposely to the plaza to sleep there. Since the sky was somewhat clouded, the Indians did not notice what was going on until the darkening

[86] Nimuendajú, The Apinayé, 158.
[87] Nimuendajú, Vokabular und Sagen der Crengês.

1: Nimuendajú I-3 (1929-1936) 1946 908 Timbira 908



821 796 was considerably advanced. I heard one of the padntɣktíma arousing his companions and directing their attention to the phenomenon. For about five minutes they were watching without knowing what to do, then one of them ran off to bring and question an old great-uncle. At once the village grew animated, voices became audible, fires began to blaze, the chiefs and councilors assembled and summoned a precentor. Gradually the entire village foregathered in the plaza. Forming a circle round the precentor, some fifty men and youths danced unremittingly while singing, "pụduvrị kayẽ' ! pụduvrị kayčyẽ' riwahá neymã' pụdupére !"

Others made bundles of from four to six large and empty gourd bottles and used them as loud rattles. In the meantime the total eclipse had set in. Round about the squares in front of all the houses huge fires were blazing.

An old man appeared, followed by two women, each leading by the hand a girl of eight or nine. The girls lay down on their backs on a mat that was extended on the plaza for them. Two or three youths made a number of incendiary arrows, wato'hą'ra, by sticking kerneled corncobs to the tips and igniting them at the fireplaces. These missiles they shot incessantly at the moon, boys picking them up again. Since the moon was in its zenith, the arrows fell back into the crowd, which had to guard against being struck by them. As soon as the moon began to reappear from the shadow, the general excitement abated, but the chanting continued until after 3 A.M., when the moon was again quite undimmed. The two girls likewise remained until then; I was told that the moon "took" them and then recovered. No subsequent obligations devolve on them.

According to Kissenberth[88] the Northern Kayapó, singing chants of lamentation [171] and prayer, shoot burning arrows at the moon during an eclipse in order to restore its light and prevent its death, whereby it would tumble on them and destroy everyone.

821 I have never experienced a solar eclipse among the Timbira. It was interpreted to me as a struggle between sun and moon; the last time "the big star that accompanies the moon" had also taken part. In contrast to practice during a lunar eclipse no steps of any kind are taken; the people simply wait in great anxiety for the passage of the phenomenon. Children must not look at the darkened sun.

In 1910, Halley's comet caused great alarm. The Rąmkõ'kamekra were afraid of a world conflagration. At that time a precentor long since dead revived the song alluded to above (p. 190): "The star is already setting (the earth) aflame!" Usually this comet is called kačẽ'ti kamakum because its tail is conceived as smoke (kum).

Meteors (a'krą̃) flashing above the horizon excite little concern. Only when they pass near by are the people vaguely afraid of some noxious influence.

821 772 When a shooting star glides across the nocturnal sky it is said to be a star running to the other side of the sky to get married. Thus, they divide the heavens into exogamous moieties like those of their own village circle.

The Rąmkõ'kamekra do not distinguish the major planets and know only a few constellations, of which the Pleiades (krot) are the most important. When they become visible above the western horizon after sunset, this is taken as a sign that the rainy season is approaching and that it is time to make clearings for planting.

The Milky Way with its dark spots is interpreted as an ostrich (mą̃ti) whose head lies below the Southern Cross. If some night this ostrich should begin humming, it indicates that humanity is to be destroyed. He has already done so once, dragging one wing over the earth and thereby killing many people. Beside him stands a babassu (rõnti; *Orbignia speciosa*), formed by the constellation Scorpion

[88] Kissenberth, Araguaya-Reise, 55.

1: Nimuendajú 5-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS



821 772 without the stars of the hook on the tail. It stood along the ostrich's path and he threatened to knock it down, but it begged to be spared since it would kill many people if it fell to the earth. Accordingly, the ostrich passes close beside this palm.

Another constellation near the galaxy, which I was never able to grasp, is called kapúre (= jahó, *Tinamus* sp.).

In Magellanic Cloud they see Aukê's ashes (p. 245).

821 789 Against lightning, which they greatly fear because of its frequently observed effects on steppe trees, they resort to magic. A native will put the leaves of olho de boi (ropnto, jaguar eye) on his head and wave them toward the thunderstorm, saying, "mekričwąye, amekaprinare witáiye!"

821 772 The Krẽyé of Bacabal have a tale in which the storm figures as a tapir. The same story was heard among the descendants of the Gamella of Vianna.[=]

The rainbow (tanyõčwųdn, person of the rain) has its two ends resting in the open mouths of two sucuriju snakes, which themselves yield rain. It appears as a sign that the rain has ceased. When the rainbow disappears, two eel-like fish, pųppeyre (Neobraz.: mnçum), rise to the sky, where they drop into a water hole. When there is a heavy rain they again drop back into the terrestrial water. One informant said that snakes ascended to the sky by the rainbow lest there be too many here on earth.

In the sky dwell carrion vultures under their chief, the king vulture, and falcons. They have human shape there, organize log races and celebrate festivals.

There is an underworld (ikrakripyẽ). According to a tale a man hunting an armadillo broke through the ground, tumbling into the underworld. "When he turned round, he noticed that he was on a steppe, but round about no living being was to be seen, not even a bird; everything near and far was still." The Seréntę tell a similar story, which they connect with their kwiudẽ'udá racing logs, which they derive from said armadillo.

### Animism

774 775 Every human being and every animal has a soul. Plants "perhaps" also have a soul, but theirs plays no part. At death the soul leaves the body through the mouth; nobody knows how and where it enters the body. The soul of a dead person, the distinct shadow cast by him, and his image are all called mekarõ. I have no evidence for belief in a temporary departure of the soul from a living body. Contrary to Apinayé theory, sickness is not imputed to temporary soul loss,[=] and the medicine-man's shadow is not supposed to roam about in order to learn what is going on at a distance. Accordingly, during a man's lifetime his soul does not play an independent role of practical significance.

775 [771] It becomes all the more prominent after death; indeed, communion with the souls of the dead is the most conspicuous part of Eastern Timbira religion and forcibly struck Pohl among the Põrekamekra:

> Auch hier [i.e. in the cemetery for secondary burial] besuchen die Indianer noch oft die Grabhügel ihrer entschlafenen Lieben und erzählen ihnen alle Vorfallenheiten, fest überzeugt, dass die Verstorbenen sie hören und Antell nehmen können. Diese Sitte erschien mir stets sehr rührend, und ich gestehe, dass ich oft innig bewegt diese guten Menschen so an den Gräbern sitzen sah.

However, I never observed this form of devotion near the graves. Further, I have neither discovered a belief in everlasting rewards or punishments, such as Pohl ascribes to these natives, nor ever heard that a soft rustling noise revealed the approach of the spirits.

The spirits of the dead usually reside in village-like communities in the localities

[=] Nimuendajú, Vokabular und Sagen der Crengês, 635; The Gamella, 12.
[=] The Apinayé, 144.